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ON PAGE 1A

OKLAHOMA CITY SUNDAY OKLAHOMAN (OK)
27 April 1986

State Native Key Player in POW Rescue Mission Drama

By Ray Robinson

The cast of characters includes several men who rose to the top echelons of the U.S. military, a mysterious ex-policeman who claims to have exposed two government murder plots, the publisher of a magazine for mercenaries, a Texas billionaire, the CIA and other assorted intelligence agencies.

The script calls for the rescue, by hook or by crook, of U.S. prisoners allegedly left behind in Southeast Asia when American military forces pulled out 12 years ago.

This script, unlike those of Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris, is being played out in real life. And for the last seven years, its characters have spent untold sums of money hatching plots and counter plots, all in search of at least one of the elusive prisoners.

The common thread among the diverse cast of characters, touching each of them in one way or another, is James Gordon "Bo" Gritz, a tough-talking, barrel-chested former Green Beret officer whose bold and thus far unsuccessful excursions into hostile Laos have made him a legend in his own time among the more militant factions of the POW/MIA movement.

A native of Enid, Gritz won a chest full of medals and a reputation for leading native mercenaries on daring and unconventional missions during the war in Indochina. He retired from the Army as a lieutenant colonel in 1978 and has since occupied himself developing prisoner rescue plans with names such as Lazarus, Grand Eagle and Velvet Hammer, which couldn't fail to capture the media's attention and the public's imagination.

The Gritz missions have given rise to others:

- One, which never got off the ground, was developed by a congressman who claims at one time to have had the support of President Reagan's national security adviser.

- The publisher of *Soldier of Fortune* magazine built his own camp inside Laos to search for U.S. prisoners.

- The government, it has been widely reported, has sent its own

teams of mercenaries into Laos in search of prisoners.

For the last two months, *The Oklahoman* has investigated the connections between Gritz, the government and the other factions of the POW/MIA movement, and the bold, sometimes bizarre and always unsuccessful operations that have been mounted into Laos.

Throughout his forays into Laos, including a 1982 mission that resulted in his arrest in Thailand, Gritz has claimed to have the support of various government agencies, including the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and a secretive Army unit known as the Intelligence Support Activity. However, the record on whether the government extended any support to Gritz is unclear.

The most frequently cited piece of evidence supporting Gritz' claim is an undated letter to him from Lt. Gen. Harold Aaron, a former deputy director of the DIA and chief of Army intelligence who died of a heart attack in 1980. In the letter, Aaron endorses Gritz' retirement from the military to pursue the POW issue through private channels and adds:

"Because of the politics involved, contact me only if you get in a spot with no way out. This thing is so sensitive it could result in a real inquisition if word leaked out that we were proceeding unofficially." The letter concludes, "Bo, destroy this and all other written communication between us."

Gritz contends that it was Aaron who visited him in Panama in 1976 and asked him to investigate the possibility that U.S. prisoners were still being held in Southeast Asia.

Of the letter, Gritz said in an interview with *The Oklahoman* last month, "Aaron did not need to do that. ... the reason Aaron did that at all is to maybe give me a warm feeling that I wasn't going to be put out on a limb and then have the limb sawed off."

But Aaron's immediate superior at the DIA, Air Force Lt. Gen. Eugene Tighe, said in an interview that he doubted the letter's authenticity.

Tighe said he had seen at least three different versions of the letter, the first of which was unsigned and written on Army three-star general stationery. That version first surfaced in 1984 in the syndicated column of reporter Jack Anderson.

The second version, Tighe said, was slightly different in composition but bore what purported to be Aaron's signature. And the third version, Tighe said, was similar to the second except that it was written on DIA stationery.

Tighe said he found it suspicious that Aaron, an intelligence professional, would put something so sensitive on paper and conclude with a dramatic line instructing Gritz to destroy it. "First of all," Tighe said, "that shows something about Bo, because Bo didn't destroy it, obviously."

Billionaire Denies Ties to Gritz

Like Gritz, Tighe has publicly stated that he believes U.S. prisoners are still being held in Southeast Asia.

But unlike Gritz, Tighe feels that any effort to rescue them is doomed unless it has the support, either public or covert, of the U.S. government.

Informed of Tighe's statements concerning the letter, Gritz said: "Makes no difference to me. Does he question the authenticity of the prisoners of war? Does he question the authenticity of H. Ross Perot's involvement?"

The involvement of Perot, a billionaire Dallas computer magnate, is an article of faith among Gritz supporters. Many activists in the POW movement support the establishment of an independent commission, chaired by Perot, to study the possibility that U.S. prisoners are still being held in Southeast Asia.

As Gritz told it during the interview, he was summoned to Perot's office sometime in early 1979. As they stood under an imposing bronze statue of actor John Wayne, Perot al-

legedly gave Gritz a mandate to resolve the POW issue.

Gritz claimed Perot told him: "Bo, I want you to go over to Southeast Asia. Do everything you have to do. Use whatever means you have to use."

Gritz said he returned from Southeast Asia with a plan to bring promising witnesses to the United States for polygraph tests, but that Perot rejected it.

Perot is a firm believer in the existence of American prisoners in Southeast Asia, but he denies that he ever solicited Gritz to tackle the problem.

"I never asked him to do anything. I met with him once at his request," Perot said in an interview. "So he and I don't have any ties."

Perot also said that bringing the prisoners home through an armed rescue mission seemed to be out of the question, because there appeared to be no solid intelligence as to where they are. "You're gonna have to negotiate them out," he said.

No Trade-Off, Ex-CIA Man Says

Gritz charged that the U.S. government, whether through incompetence or faint-heartedness, has repeatedly failed him and his men on rescue missions, or asked them to stand down after months of preparation.

All the while, he said, the stream of servicemen's bones from Southeast Asia has continued, with the government wiping its books clean of one missing serviceman after another.

"It's in every bureaucrat's ... best interest to keep it on a bone basis," he said. "I have never been in the bone business."

Gritz claimed, for instance, that in December 1981, Adm. Bobby Ray Inman, then deputy director of the CIA, had asked him to drop the POW issue, promising that the spy agency would devote its "fullest attention" to it if Gritz halted his operations. Gritz said he refused.

Inman, now retired from the Navy and chief executive of Micro-Electronics and Computer Technology Inc., denied that the meeting went as Gritz said. In a statement issued through a corporate spokesman, Inman said Gritz approached the CIA "with a proposal for some things that he wanted to do."

The CIA, Inman said, refused to

lend its support to Gritz' operations.

Inman added that "there was no trade-off with Gritz on what the CIA would or wouldn't do in response for his not undertaking those actions."

Magazine Finds No Real Evidence

It was in November 1982, with the launching of the ill-fated POW rescue mission code named "Operation Lazarus," that Gritz burst upon the public scene, leading several Americans and more than a dozen local commandos from a base camp in Thailand across the Mekong River into Laos.

The group was ambushed in Laos and scrambled back across the river into Thailand, where word of their mission had leaked to the press and was even being carried on the Voice of America broadcasts being beamed into Laos. Gritz and four of his comrades landed in a Thai jail.

Lazarus wasn't the first Gritz operation but it was the one which made him a celebrity.

It also was the one which put him at odds with Robert K. Brown, the retired Army officer who publishes Soldier of Fortune, the Colorado-based magazine for adventurers.

At the time, Brown and the magazine were involved in their own project aimed at finding and freeing POWs, which was staffed in part by disaffected members of a previous Gritz operation. The following year, Soldier of Fortune put out a special issue with a scathing expose of Gritz' operation, and posed the question: "Bo Gritz: Hero or Huckster?"

Gritz charged that it was Brown and the magazine staff who learned of Operation Lazarus and leaked it to a reporter for the San Diego Union.

As a result of the report in the Union, Gritz claimed, the Voice of America even informed its Laotian listeners that his operation was targeted at the towns of Senphan and Gnommarat.

"Soldier of Fortune did release it. There's no question about it," Gritz said. "Brown was trying to figure out some way he could use it, because it was red hot."

Brown confirmed that he had passed the information to a reporter for the San Diego newspaper, but said that was not until the Gritz story had appeared in a Thai newspaper, the Bangkok Post.

He said Gritz's allegations against him were either a "misunderstanding of the true facts" or "a flat out lie that he has come up with simply to cover his own incompetence."

Brown denied that there was any grudge between him and Gritz. "I just think Gritz is a flake," he said.

"Nobody's trying to do a job on Gritz," said Tom Reisinger, the director of special projects for the magazine. "We didn't question his cause and we still don't. We question the methods that he used, in certain instances. But nobody's out to get."

A friend of Brown's, retired Army Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub, estimated that the publisher had spent \$300,000 scouring refugee camps in Thailand for information on American prisoners in Laos.

At one point, Soldier of Fortune had even built its own covert base camp in Laos, code named Liberty City and manned by anti-communist Laotian guerrillas recruited by the magazine.

"We felt we had some very good leads," Reisinger said. But he said the operation failed to produce any "concrete evidence" that Americans were being held prisoner there.

"We did nothing illegal," said Reisinger, who crossed the border into Laos at least five times himself.

"We did not cross any borders with weapons or anything like that."

Other Efforts In the Works

But Gritz and Soldier of Fortune hardly had the field to themselves.

In May 1981, the U.S. government, under criticism from activists in the POW movement, dispatched a team of Laotian mercenaries across the border to reconnoiter a site where satellite and reconnaissance photography had reportedly suggested some of the prisoners may have been held. The mission failed to produce evidence that Americans were imprisoned at the camp.

Meanwhile, another plan, hatched by U.S. Rep. John LeBoutillier, a New York Republican and leading activist on the POW issue, was in the works.

LeBoutillier, who was in the House of Representatives from 1981 to 1983, said he had convinced then-National Security Adviser William P. Clark to use money from the coffers of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to

buy the prisoners' way out of Laos.

The plan called for the DEA, which had agents in Southeast Asia and access to large amounts of cash, to give the money to LeBoutillier's organization, known as "Save Our POW/MIAs," which would make the pay-offs.

LeBoutillier said Clark endorsed the operation because "he thought it was a good plan where we could circumvent the CIA, which he did not want to deal with, and get government money to get the POWs out privately so if there was any embarrassment, the government wouldn't have to take it."

But Clark, whom LeBoutillier called "a good guy and a patriot," became secretary of the interior in 1983 and was succeeded by Robert McFarlane. LeBoutillier said McFarlane, who has since stepped down as national security adviser, canceled the operation.

Before leaving the post last year, McFarlane made an ostensibly off-the-record speech to a private business group in which he said he believed Americans were still being held in Southeast Asia. LeBoutillier tape recorded McFarlane's remarks and released the tape to the Wall Street Journal.

Tighe has frequently said that there would be nothing wrong in paying what would amount to a ransom for the return of U.S. prisoners.

If such a plan could not be carried out through official channels, he said, a private entity could be used as an intermediary to cover the government's involvement.

"I think John LeBoutillier was attracted to that idea," Tighe said.

Circumstances Described Differently

It was about 18 months before the Lazarus debacle that Gritz' path crossed that of Scott Barnes, a free-lance adventurer and former private police officer, who has emerged as one of the most controversial and shadowy figures to become involved in private rescue efforts.

The two men differ on the circumstances of their meeting; Gritz claims that Barnes came to him, and Barnes says it was the other way around. Barnes, in a court affidavit on file in North Carolina, said Gritz contacted him seeking an introduction to a former Laotian general named Vang

Pao, who commanded the CIA's secret mercenary army in Laos during the war and is now living in the United States.

Gritz, in an interview, said Barnes approached him unsolicited, saying that Vang Pao wanted to see him.

When the two men finally did get together, Gritz recalled, they tried unsuccessfully to settle the question of just where Barnes had come from.

"I thought he's your guy," Vang Pao reportedly said. Gritz replied, "No, general, he's *your* guy."

Gritz claimed that the eager Barnes never accompanied him on any of his missions to Southeast Asia. Barnes, however, maintains that he went to Thailand and crossed into Laos with a man identified as "Mike J. Baldwin" and 30 native members of a Gritz reconnaissance team.

About 27 kilometers inside Laos, Barnes claimed, the team came upon a prison camp occupied by men he described as "clearly Caucasian."

Barnes said the team then retreated into Thailand, where it learned Gritz was no longer in charge of the operation.

He said he was informed that the U.S. embassy in Thailand had sent the team instructions "that if the presence of Caucasian(s) was confirmed at this location that the 'merchandise was to be liquidated.'"

At that point, Barnes said, he dropped out of the operation and returned to the United States.

That incident was the second time Barnes had gone public with allegations of a government murder plot.

Earlier, Barnes had charged that the CIA had asked him to kill Honolulu financier Ronald L. Rewald, who was defending himself against fraud charges by claiming that the spy agency was using his company as a front.

ABC News broadcast Barnes' charges and, in an unprecedented move, the CIA filed a fairness complaint against the network with the Federal Communications Commission. ABC had already acknowledged in a follow-up report that it could not confirm Barnes' allegations, and the CIA's complaint was dismissed.

As he plots his next move from his home in the Nevada desert, Gritz looks back on a series of unsuccessful missions and places much of the blame on the U.S. government.

Recalling all the mix-ups and missed chances, Gritz says, "I can see

that there may have been a real nigger in the woodpile here. Enough so that our next effort is going to be sans any liaison (with the government)."

Can U.S. buy embassy safety?

■ The State Department wants \$4.4 billion to guard against terrorist attacks on its embassies, but it may be unwittingly following a system that will leave them tragically vulnerable.

No one questions the need for greater security. Libyan strong man Muammar Qadhafi threatened war against Americans around the world following his humiliation by the Sixth Fleet in the Gulf of Sidra. Officials vow to avoid a repetition of the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran or the April 1983 suicide bombing that killed 86 in the Beirut Embassy. A total of 33 Americans have been killed in 243 attacks and attempted attacks against U.S. embassies and personnel abroad since 1975.

A bill providing for new buildings and improved security at U.S. embassies is moving through Congress. Yet *U.S. News & World Report* has learned that government investigators and independent experts fear the costly program may overlook several glaring compromises of security:

- For \$1,000, anyone can legally purchase detailed architectural blueprints for any overseas mission to be built, giving potential foes a guided path for infiltration and attack.
- Several new embassies now under construction fall short of toughened security requirements.
- Background checks of the embassies' foreign employees, including security guards, are sometimes inadequate.
- New measures focus heavily on the threat of bombings and may overlook defending against other types of terrorist attacks.

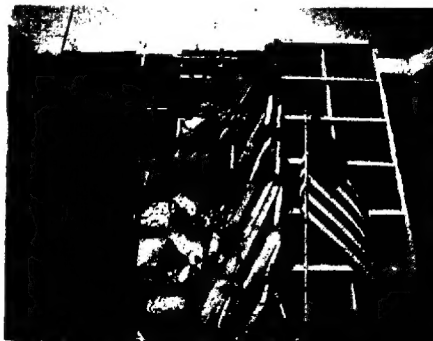
The embassy bill, now pending in the Senate after passing the House of Representatives by 389 to 7, proposes the most ambitious construction project in State Department history. Over the next five years, the U.S. intends to erect 79 new missions, beef up 175 existing facilities and launch programs ranging from buying fleets of armored vehicles to hiring thousands of local guards.

But how safe will the new embassies really be?

Current procedure allows any firm, American or foreign, to buy from the State Department's Office of Foreign Buildings the design and specifications for U.S. embassies scheduled to be built. Contractors routinely reproduce the plans for their subcontractors to estimate costs while preparing bids.

A State Department official acknowledges that even a company fronting for the Libyan government could

Blueprints are impressive, but an enterprising terrorist can get them for \$1,000. It's the system, diplomats explain



In Beirut, the U.S. Embassy lies in ruins after 1983 suicide bombing

acquire the floor plans for a U.S. mission under construction.

"The blueprint they can buy for \$1,000 doesn't jeopardize our security," insists Robert Lamb, director of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security. "What we need to protect are the security systems and our work in secure areas, and that's classified work done by cleared American personnel."

Others see a definite risk.

"If you want to blow up a building, you have to know the layout," notes Shelly Lynn, an engineer with Controlled Demolition of Cliffside Park, N.J. He adds that if a person skilled in use of explosives knows a building's weak points, he can bring the whole structure down like a house of cards.

A former hostage from the Teheran

Embassy explains: "Having a blueprint is a great advantage to terrorists. If anybody wants to penetrate a building, particularly one that is designed against terrorist attacks, he would want to get hold of the floor plan."

The former hostage recalls that the U.S. Embassy in Teheran was "a simple and open building," which the Iranians entered through a basement door they had pinpointed. After the takeover, six Americans escaped to the Canadian Embassy through a back door left unguarded by the attackers.

In 1976, an Israeli rescue force was able to stage a precision operation to free hostages in Entebbe, Uganda, because it had the blueprint from the Israeli firm that built the airport.

U.S. News learned that one of the firms bidding for the new regional embassy in Oman is the Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC), headed by Hasib Sabbagh, a Palestinian business executive who served as Yassir Arafat's representative in arranging the withdrawal of Arafat's besieged Palestine Liberation Organization from Lebanon in 1982.

American intelligence documents accuse Arafat of approving the 1973 assassination in Khartoum, Sudan, of U.S. Ambassador Cleo Noel and his deputy, George Moore.

Washington officials view Sabbagh as a moderate, and his 30-year-old firm is one of the region's largest. But terrorism experts are concerned that factions in the PLO could obtain blueprints for the building through individuals working for the company.

Contacted by *U.S. News* at CCC's



In San Salvador, guards use mirrors to check under a car before it is allowed to enter the embassy grounds

Global cooperation seen as key to peace STATINTL

By Howard LaFranchi
Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Austin, Texas

As the world moves into an era of shifting power among nations, the deterrence afforded by US and Soviet nuclear weaponry can no longer be relied upon to safeguard humanity from a third world war, according to American and Soviet experts at a University of Texas conference last week.

The key to another 40 years without global warfare, say these superpower experts, will be cooperation — not only between the US and the USSR, but encompassing the rest of the world as well.

These were among the points stressed at a conference entitled: "The Future of US-USSR relations: Lessons for 40 years without War."

Several participants said the 40-year absence of world conflict was "remarkable," especially in light of the feelings of inevitability about nuclear war that gripped the world in the years following World War II.

Nevertheless there was a reluctance to use the word "peace" to describe the state of affairs in the post-war period, with some American participants stating it was a "bitter peace" for those nations that had come under Soviet domination after the war. Others chose simply to use the term "non-war" to describe the period.

Participants, who ranged from former national security advisors among the Americans to scientists and Americanologists among the Soviets, generally agreed that the presence of nuclear arms was the greatest single deterrent to world war since 1945.

"Optimism is a vital prelude to war," said John Gaddis, a Cold War historian from Ohio University.

"But nuclear weapons have a dampening effect on anyone who might otherwise have been optimistic about the outcome of a war."

Notes of caution were sounded over the possible destabilizing effects of expanding technologies, and of an emerging new international economic order.

Noting a "recent, radical shift" in third-world countries to a rapid adaptation of high technologies, former national security advisor Walt Rostow said the world's security might depend on how the superpowers respond to an accelerating shift in world economic standings. "The real job," he said, will be to "organize our affairs so the absorption of the rest of the world into this kind of technology is done peacefully."

Several participants said continued deterioration in the Soviet Union's economy could emerge as a major threat to international stability. In light of this, Presi-

dent Reagan's multi-billion-dollar Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) was termed destabilizing by some Americans, as well as by the Russians.

"In as much as SDI becomes another way to conduct economic warfare with the Soviet Union, then it is clearly destabilizing" and "dangerous," said Ed Hewett, an economist with the Brookings Institution. Sergey Rogov, first secretary at the Soviet embassy in Washington, said his country considers SDI — also known as "star wars" — an American attempt to "force us to spend beyond our means on armament."

The Soviets expressed particular frustration over the development of an expensive, all-new arms technology since it comes at a time when their "feeling of security is the greatest perhaps since Peter the Great" in the early 18th century, according to Andrey Kokoshin, deputy director of Moscow's Institute for the USA and Canada.

The Soviets stressed arms reduction as the only means of enhancing world security. But a number of the Americans said it would be foolish to rush into dismantling the very weapons systems that have helped bring the world "fragile security" for four decades.

"To toy around with [arms reduction] before we've achieved better relations between the US and the Soviet Union would be very destabilizing," said Brent Scowcroft, former national security advisor to President Gerald Ford.

Former Sen. John Tower, who has just completed a little more than a year in Geneva as arms reduction negotiator, said that even though both sides accept the concept of a non-nuclear world, "I don't think that either nation has a carefully formulated, practical plan to arrive at that result."

Several participants noted that nuclear arms reduction — or eventually their elimination — made little sense if the result was to make the world safe for conventional warfare.

Former CIA deputy director Bobby Ray Inman cautioned that rapid technological advancements in conventional weaponry — and the growing number of "world players" who will have access to them — will pose new threats to world stability.

Robert Bowie, former deputy director of the CIA and professor emeritus in international relations at Harvard University, said he sees the "needs for cooperation greatly exceeding the capacity for cooperation at this point." Nevertheless, he said the superpowers are "staggering toward the cooperative approach."

The 'need for [superpower] cooperation greatly exceeds the capacity for cooperation at this point.'

— Robert Bowie

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A19.WASHINGTON POST
8 April 1986

STATINTL

Bob Inman

Protecting Americans Abroad

The House of Representatives will soon be voting on an extremely important piece of legislation: the Omnibus Anti-Terrorism Act of 1986. At stake are:

- The security of 254 American embassies and missions abroad, and foreign diplomatic posts in this country;

- The lives and safety of thousands of Americans and their families who are serving their country in diplomatic posts throughout the world.

- And, ultimately, the security of our nation, and how it does business with other nations.

Historically, most societies have recognized the importance of communicating with each other, and the safety of ambassadors was held inviolate—that is, right up to our times, which might well be dubbed the Age of Terrorism. The tragic fact is that ambassadors and diplomats throughout the Free World are prime targets for terrorist kidnapping, assault and murder, regardless of nationality.

Americans, because of the leading role their country plays in world events, are prime targets. Over the past decade, our facilities and our people have been assaulted by terrorists on the average of once every 17 days, and unless something is done, the situation is expected to get much worse in the years ahead.

A major step toward stemming the tide is the anti-terrorism act now before the House. This sweeping legislation incorporates many of the recommendations of the Vice President's Task Force on Combatting Terrorism and the major recommendations of the Secretary of State's

Advisory Panel on Overseas Security, which I had the privilege of chairing.

The problem of international terrorism is a complex one, and it will not be solved overnight with a single piece of legislation. However, this bill is a major step in the right direction; it deserves the wholehearted, bipartisan support of Congress, the administration and all Americans.

It will very significantly improve the security of Americans serving overseas, and of foreign diplomats in this country. Key provisions include reorganizing the security functions at the

Department of State to make them more effective, establishing accountability following terrorist attacks, and strengthening our physical facilities overseas to make them more secure from assault.

In the days of Gramm-Rudman and federal spending cuts, this latter recommendation has raised some eyebrows, because the package authorizes spending \$4 billion over five years to relocate, upgrade or otherwise strengthen our overseas facilities to deter terrorist attacks and to protect them from increasingly sophisticated electronic spying.

Realistically, the question is not whether we can afford to do this but whether we can afford *not* to. Financially, we already have a multi-million-dollar investment in facilities abroad, and simple business sense dictates this investment must be protected.

In human terms, we have a moral obligation to protect those of our citizens who are serving us, often at great personal expense, in overseas posts.

The omnibus bill creates a new Bureau of Diplomatic Security in the State Department, headed by an assistant secretary of state, and a Diplomatic Security Service, to strengthen and streamline the security function, and establishes accountability by setting up boards of inquiry following a terrorist attack to determine where and why security might have failed, who might be held accountable and what lessons might be learned to help thwart future attacks.

Other portions of the legislation would substantially improve maritime security at both U.S. and foreign ports (the need made dramatically evident by the Achille Lauro incident), and would go far toward preventing weapons-grade nuclear material from falling into terrorist hands.

In a world with many destructive forces, common sense dictates that America must continue to meet, discuss, negotiate and communicate with a broad spectrum of diverse societies and peoples. That world also watches how we act and react in providing security for our citizens serving their country abroad. Protecting our own diplomats is in a very real sense a basic requirement of our national security.

The terrorist seeks to force us to pull back, to withdraw, to become isolated and alone. If we are to remain a world power we cannot allow him to succeed. And that is why this anti-terrorist legislation is so important to all of us.

The writer, former deputy director of Central Intelligence, is president and chief executive officer of Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corp.

SCIENCE DIGEST
April 1986

THE REAL-LIFE SEARCH FOR RED OCTOBER

BY T. A. HEPPENHEIMER

Last year's surprise best-selling novel *The Hunt for Red October* by Tom Clancy, which portrays a flagrant Soviet spy and money game between a Soviet submarine commander determined to defect to the United States, who is in a supersecret vessel, a flotilla of Soviet subs sent to detect him, and an American submarine force dispatched to rescue the valuable prize. The novel was admired by President Reagan and many other Washingtonians in a position to know that its technical thesis was frighteningly accurate: The Walker spy ring uncovered a year ago may have seriously compromised the security of our nuclear submarine force, long believed to be invulnerable to enemy attack. This all too real possibility is giving our naval war planners nightmares something like this:

In the wake of the Ayatollah Khomeini's death, Iran is torn by bloody civil war.

The Soviet Union invokes its

1921 treaty with Iran and sends 150,000 troops south to help "restore order."

At the UN, the United States protests the action. The Soviet premier rejects the protest.

Soviet fighters harass a Pan Am jet in the Berlin air corridor. It crash-

lands in East Germany. Moscow says the plane was spying.

The *Washington Post* prints a rumor that a battery of SS-20 Soviet missiles is being shipped to Nicaragua.

Crisis talk dominates the nightly news. The British prime minister urges the President to talk personally with the Soviet premier.

What Washington does not know is that the Soviet Union has perfected a daring secret strategy to win without a fight—by demonstrating that it can neutralize the "invulnerable" heart of

our nuclear-defense triad with conventional weapons: The Soviets already have the ability to shoot down our aging B-52 bombers and destroy many of our Minuteman III ICBMs in their silos. Now they will find and sink one of our nuclear-missile-carrying submarines.

If they're successful, our longtime policy of nuclear retaliation will no longer be credible, and we will be forced to negotiate a Middle East settlement on Moscow's terms. The reason for Washington's diplomatic about-face will remain hidden in the ocean depths for many years.

At the crisis point of East-West tension, the secret plan, code-named SOCHI, is approved by the politburo. Quietly, orders are issued from naval headquarters in Moscow dispatching an attack-submarine group to sea.

Three days later, the U.S.S. *Von Steuben*, a black-hulled strategic-missile submarine carrying 16 Poseidon missiles, puts out on routine patrol from Charleston, South Carolina. A Soviet agent watches it pass beneath the harbor bridge. That night, coded signals

pass from an orbiting satellite to a Soviet Victor III-class nuclear attack submarine lying quietly under the surface 70 miles offshore. Some 75 feet shorter than *Von Steuben*, the Victor III boats carry a large sonar pod mounted on the after stabilizer fin.

Two other Soviet submarines are within 100 miles: a missile boat of the Yankee class, the same size as *Von Steuben*, and a much smaller, fast, deep-diving Alfa attack submarine with twice the speed of the American sub. The Yankee-class boat is deliberately making a fair amount of noise by

running its pumps faster than usual. *Von Steuben* picks up the noise, but the other two Soviet vessels are quiet and go undetected. As the American submarine leaves port, the Victor III boat tracks it, using large on-board hydrophones. Slowly, carefully, it maneuvers into *Von Steuben*'s "baffles"—the acoustic blind spot to the rear of the submarine where sonar will have difficulty detecting it.

The three Soviet submarine commanders coordinate their movements by means of an acoustic communication system built around accurate, well-synchronized atomic clocks. The frequencies of their underwater transmitters and receivers are rapidly changed in a random but coordinated pattern. The Soviet submarines' messages are heard as noise by *Von Steuben*. They maneuver to form a triangle—with U.S.S. *Von Steuben* in the middle, aware only of the Yankee-class boat.

The captain of that Soviet craft sets the trap by heading his boat toward *Von Steuben* at a high enough speed